
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FERC COMPLAINT PROCEDURES REVISED

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission today approves revised procedures for handling complaints filed in cases involving natural gas, oil pipelines, electric rates and hydroelectric issues.

In a final rule, the Commission cited the need to establish procedures so that all complaints are handled in a timely, efficient and fair manner in light of the significant, market-driven changes occurring in the industries it regulates. The revised complaint procedures provide an early warning system for identifying potential market problems and enable the Commission to respond more effectively to activities in the marketplace.

Among other things, the Commission requires that complaints meet certain informational criteria and that responses be filed within a shorter time frame. Complaints may be resolved in a number of ways, including fast-track processing for complaints that are time-sensitive. Other approaches include Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Commission decisions on pleadings, hearings before FERC's administrative law judges, and interim relief.

Fast-track processing is available in cases involving disputes that require expedited resolution. It is only available to complainants who request the procedure and present documentation to support its use.

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The Commission is also taking a number of initiatives to encourage and support consensual resolution of disputes. It recently announced the formation of a Dispute Resolution Service to increase awareness of the availability of ADR and to encourage its use. The service will identify cases appropriate for ADR processes and conduct ADR sessions.

In addition, the Commission will codify its current Enforcement Hotline procedures in a new Section 1b.21, Rules Relating to Investigations. The Hotline has proven effective in handling informal complaints in an efficient manner. While not adopting any new procedures, the Commission said that codifying the Hotline in its regulations will help publicize and establish the Hotline as a viable alternative to filing a formal complaint. Recently, the Commission established a confidential electronic mail address for the Hotline at hotline@ferc.fed.us. The Hotline may be called toll-free at 1-877-303-4340 or locally at 202-208-1390.

The final rule is effective 30 days after its publication in the Federal Register.